

supplies close to 40 percent of the natural gas for our country, and was off line for a considerable amount of time following Hurricane Rita. It highlights the strategic interest that southwest Louisiana plays to our energy industry and why we must ensure that this infrastructure will be protected from storms.

This is another photo of the same area, more close up, showing the tanks. We had about 7 or 8 feet of water in this area. One way we can protect our energy infrastructure is to expand drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf. This can provide a long-term oil and gas supply that would serve the bridge to renewable energy sources.

Most importantly, it would also provide States with critical revenue sharing from any oil or gas leasing off their coast, allowing States like Louisiana to fund our own protection from future disasters.

Mr. Speaker, despite our many challenges, the people of southwest Louisiana remain determined to rebuild their communities and businesses. Parents look forward to the day when their children can once again attend schools and churches in a safe and comfortable environment.

Travelers look forward to a day when they can escape the summer heat with a trip to Holly Beach in Cameron Parish. Farmers look forward to the day when they can once again tend to their fields.

Mr. Speaker, southwest Louisiana has already begun to plan for our future. It is up to us as Members of Congress to help them realize it.

#### EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR HURRICANE RITA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, Congressman MEEK from Florida, for allowing me to reclaim my time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my good friend, Congressman BOUSTANY from Louisiana, in urging our colleagues not to forget the victims of Hurricane Rita as they determine priority funding in the Hurricane supplemental bill that is before the House and the Senate today.

You may know, but, of course, last August Hurricane Katrina, the sixth largest Hurricane in gulf coast history hit the gulf coast. It sent a human tide of over half a million evacuees to Texas. And while our State was struggling with the unprecedented effects of that storm, its own coast took a direct hit from Hurricane Rita, the fourth largest storm in gulf coast history, just 3 weeks later.

As Hurricane Rita grew into one of the most intense storms in recorded history, steering a path through Texas and along the Louisiana border, our State, and especially southeast and

east Texas were in the midst of its unprecedented response to Hurricane Katrina.

So our region not only took in evacuees, tens of thousands from Louisiana, and are thrilled that we did, we also took in 2.7 million evacuees from Hurricane Rita, the largest in history.

Then the hurricane shifted; Hurricane Rita went right up those same communities that had already done so much. Rita delivered a devastating blow to the region. As this photo illustrates, the resulting physical damage was massive.

The town of Sabine Pass was leveled. Further inland, entire communities, including houses, businesses, bridges, roads and utilities, were severely damaged or destroyed by Hurricane-force winds and torrential rains.

Over 75,000 Texas homes were damaged or destroyed in Rita, \$1 billion of our timber crop, the largest economic driver in east Texas; and today, 10 percent of our Rita evacuees have yet to return. Without homes or without places to work, we are again in a real fight for our lives.

Today we have a number of our Texas leaders, southeast Texas Recovery Team in Washington meeting with the White House, meeting with House leaders, meeting with FEMA and HUD to talk about how Texas can recover.

We had, as I said, 75,000 homes damaged or destroyed. Many of those have temporary blue tarps on today that are starting to deteriorate or blow off. When the hurricane season hits, we will put more and more people out of their homes.

We are asking for about \$1 billion in community development block grant funds in housing to help repair those homes, to help get people back in their homes, to help southeast Texas recover.

We are also asking for equal treatment. These are all photos from the Beaumont Enterprise and their special edition on Rita, showing the damage from this region. But as we rebuild, we find that, unfortunately, the Federal Government split Hurricane Rita along State lines, literally provided one assistance to our Louisiana neighbors, and a different level to our Texas neighbors, which is terribly unfair and creates a terrible burden on our Texas communities, many of whom are poor, many with very high minority and poverty rates, all of them eager to help our Louisiana neighbors, but also eager to try to recover ourselves.

So we are up here asking for the same 90/10 reimbursement rate of FEMA that our Louisiana folks have received for the exact same hurricane, same storm, same damage. Different treatment, same storm. It ought to be the same storm, same damage, same treatment.

Mr. Speaker, let me close with this. This Congress, our government, are charged with a duty to wisely allocate precious taxpayer dollars. This hurricane supplement has become a magnet for some less-than-justified projects.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: that the Hurricane Rita assistance in schools of 90/10 and in housing are not only fair and justified, but will go a long way toward helping these communities who did so much for our Louisiana neighbors and are doing so much today to help them recover at a time of terrible need.

#### LADIES OF THE GULF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. MEEK for allowing me to make some additional comments with my friends, Mr. BRADY from southeast Texas, and Dr. CHARLES BOUSTANY from Louisiana.

The area of the State of Texas that I represent, Mr. Speaker, borders Louisiana, and also borders the Gulf of Mexico. And today we had another storm hit not Texas, but Washington, DC. Individuals from southeast Texas and east Texas, government leaders, community activists, chambers of commerce presidents, came to Washington to make the case for what occurred in the last 6½ months in southeast Texas.

By way of review, the ladies of the gulf came into the Gulf of Mexico last fall. The first of those, Katrina, came through, became the sixth largest hurricane, most powerful hurricane to ever hit the gulf coast. And when that occurred, 450,000 people from Louisiana went west. They crossed the Sabine River into Texas. Many of them came into my district.

Many of those people are still there. Several thousand kids are still in school in Texas from Louisiana. So many people are in Texas from Louisiana that we have a mayor's race in New Orleans this Saturday, and the two candidates campaigning for mayor in Louisiana have billboards all over the Houston area soliciting votes from people in Louisiana that happen to be in Texas.

Katrina was mainly a water-damage hurricane. The waters rose, caused damage, the waters stayed a long time. One of the towns of course hit was New Orleans. The national media focused on Katrina day after day after day. But 3 weeks later, another lady of the gulf came. Her name was Rita. She became the fourth most powerful hurricane to ever hit the gulf coast. She hit western Louisiana and east Texas, part of the area that I represent.

The largest evacuation in American history took place in Texas because of Hurricane Rita. Over 2 million people evacuated their homes. In Beaumont alone, 8,320 people were airlifted out of hospitals, in the middle of the night with C-130 transport planes, to 14 different States.

The first responders before Hurricane Rita hit loaded their police cars, their emergency equipment, their fire trucks, their front-end loaders, and